

Sandgrabbing At Duxbury Beach

Duxbury may set a precedent in New England by installing a "sandgrabbing" operation at Duxbury Beach Park with the approval of Ralph Blakeman, manager of the park. Aim is to prevent beach erosion. Blakeman noted that Duxbury Beach is often the victim of northeast storms.

The 200-foot wall of cinder blocks is bound by steel rods. The blocks were put in place last week at the shoreline near the public bathhouse. This method has been successfully used elsewhere in the U.S. and Canada, and is being tried in at least 10 foreign countries.

Ron Kidd of Marshfield, president of Sandgrabber, Inc., installed 4,000 blocks last week. Said Samuel Fair of Bay City, Mich., who invented the process:

"We went to the Duxbury Beach Ass'n and asked permission to put in a pilot project at no cost to the town to show people what we have and what it will do to stop erosion," explained Fair. "It'll now last forever and there'll be a new stretch of sandy beach. Instead of fighting Mother Nature with huge walls of steel or concrete, groins, jetties, breakers or revetments, the Sandgrabber seduces her - brings the force of the waves through or over the block structure.

"This dissipates the energy of the waves and causes the water to drop its load of sand and gravel inward from the Sandgrabber. As the sand level rises inward, there is a tendency for the coarser sand and gravel to be deposited in front of the Sandgrabber, thus building the additional new beach." He said the 3-foot-high line of blocks will be completely covered by sand in a few weeks. "It depends on the wind," said Fair.

The Sandgrabber removes sand from the water. Everyone has been trying to figure out how to take sand out of the water and this process does it.

Kidd said installation costs range from \$60 to \$100 per foot, depending on the locality and what equipment is needed. In some instances cranes and barges are needed, but the Duxbury project was easy. Workmen carried the blocks from trucks and installed them on the beach quickly.

The Duxbury pilot project is costing Sandgrabber Inc. \$13,000.

"It's going to lift the beach up 3 feet and it's going to block the sand from going back into the ocean," said Kidd.